

Public Law 100-64
100th Congress

Joint Resolution

Designating July 2, 1987, as "National Literacy Day".

July 6, 1987

[S.J. Res. 117]

Whereas literacy is a necessary tool for survival in our society;
Whereas 35,000,000 Americans today read at a level which is less than necessary for full survival needs;

Whereas there are 27,000,000 adults in the United States who cannot read, whose resources are left untapped, and who are unable to offer their full contribution to society;

Whereas illiteracy is growing rapidly, as 2,300,000 persons, including 1,200,000 legal and illegal immigrants, 1,000,000 high school dropouts, and 100,000 refugees, are added to the pool of illiterates annually;

Whereas the annual cost of illiteracy to the United States in terms of welfare expenditures, crime, prison expenses, lost revenues, and industrial and military accidents has been estimated at \$225,000,000,000;

Whereas the competitiveness of the United States is eroded by the presence in the workplace of millions of Americans who are functionally or technologically illiterate;

Whereas there is a direct correlation between the number of illiterate adults unable to perform at the standard necessary for available employment and the money allocated to child welfare and unemployment compensation;

Whereas the percentage of illiterates in proportion to population size is higher for blacks and Hispanics, resulting in increased economic and social discrimination against these minorities;

Whereas the prison population represents the single highest concentration of adult illiteracy;

Whereas 1,000,000 children in the United States between the ages of 12 and 17 cannot read above a 3rd grade level, 13 percent of all 17-year-olds are functionally illiterate, and 15 percent of graduates of urban high schools read at less than a 6th grade level;

Whereas 85 percent of the juveniles who appear in criminal court are functionally illiterate;

Whereas the 47 percent illiteracy rate among black youths is expected to increase to 50 percent by 1990;

Whereas one-half of all heads of households cannot read past the 8th grade level and one-third of all mothers on welfare are functionally illiterate;

Whereas the cycle of illiteracy continues because the children of illiterate parents are often illiterate themselves because of the lack of support they receive from their home environment;

Whereas Federal, State, municipal, and private literacy programs have only been able to reach 5 percent of the total illiterate population;

Whereas it is vital to call attention to the problem of illiteracy, to understand the severity of the problem and its detrimental effects

on our society, and to reach those who are illiterate and unaware of the free services and help available to them; and
Whereas it is also necessary to recognize and thank the thousands of volunteers who are working to promote literacy and provide support to the millions of illiterates in need of assistance: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That July 2, 1987, is designated as "National Literacy Day", and the President is authorized and requested to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe such day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

Approved July 6, 1987.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—S.J. Res. 117:

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 133 (1987):
June 5, considered and passed Senate.
June 29, considered and passed House.